

NEWS RELEASE

Njozi the cheetah recovering after surgery at UP Veterinary Science Faculty



Prof Koeppel (right), Dr Michelle Otto and a student check Njozi's condition and ensure her comfort before she is transported to the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital's wildlife clinic.

PRETORIA - A well-known cheetah at the [Rietvlei Nature Reserve](#) south of Pretoria is recovering at the University of Pretoria's [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#) following specialist surgery to repair a fractured forelimb.

After showing signs of lameness, Njozi, a five-year-old female who has become a fixture among visitors and conservationists alike, was tracked and captured using her very high frequency (VHF) collar, with the assistance of Rietvlei game ranger Jeanri Weideman.

She was darted and radiographed in the field by [Prof Katja Koeppel](#), a wildlife health specialist in UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science.

Radiographs revealed that Njozi had previously fractured two bones in her right forelimb – the radius and ulna. The previous injuries had healed incorrectly (a malunion) and had fused together (a condition known as synostosis), limiting movement in her paw and likely causing abnormal stress on the limb. This, in turn, led to a new fracture just above the original injury site.

Njozi was then taken into theatre, where Dr Adriaan Kitshoff, a specialist small animal surgeon, led a team from the faculty's [Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital \(OVAH\)](#) in performing the surgery.

“In theatre, we corrected both the previous malunion and the recent fracture by removing a wedge of bone and carefully realigning the limb,” Dr Kitshoff explained. The bones were then stabilised with two metal plates, and a small bone graft from Njozi’s shoulder was used to promote healing.

According to Prof Koeppel, Njozi’s bandage was changed the day after surgery, and she was being monitored and cared for by the team of wildlife veterinarians and students at the Faculty of Veterinary Science’s wildlife clinic in the days after the surgery.

Njozi has become a favourite of visitors to the Rietvlei Nature Reserve since her relocation from the Garden Route Game Lodge to the reserve in August 2020. In 2023, after she had given birth to five cubs, wildlife veterinarians and students from UP’s Faculty of Veterinary Science assisted the City of Tshwane with the capture and relocation of the five cheetah cubs.

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Photo captions

- **Photo 1** - Prof Katja Koeppel attends to Njozi in the field, after which she was transferred to the Faculty of Veterinary Science’s wildlife clinic.
- **Photo 2** - Prof Koeppel (right), Dr Michelle Otto and a student check Njozi’s condition and ensure her comfort before she is transported to the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital's wildlife clinic at the University of Pretoria Faculty of Veterinary Science.
- **Photo 3** – Before being transferred to the wildlife clinic at the OVAH, Njozi’s right forelimb is bandaged by Prof Koeppel, with the assistance of Rietvlei game ranger Jeanri Weideman.
- **Photo 4** – UP Faculty of Veterinary Science students and wildlife veterinarian locum Dr Michelle Otto (right) transfer Njozi from the wildlife clinic to the operating theatre.
- **Photo 5** – Njozi after the operation.

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa. Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the [Gordon Institute of Business Science](#) (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The [2025 Times Higher Education \(THE\) Impact Rankings](#) placed UP 7th globally for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17: Partnerships for the Goals, recognising the University's leadership in building impactful global collaborations. UP also ranked 41st in the world and 1st in Africa and South Africa for SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and maintained its position as the second-highest ranked university overall in both Africa and South Africa.

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting](#) and [Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science. UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year.

In the [2025 QS World University Subject Rankings](#), UP is ranked in the top 100 in the world in Mineral & Mining Engineering (41), Veterinary Science (51–60), and Development Studies (51–100). Six UP subjects are ranked No. 1 in South Africa: Mechanical Engineering, Veterinary Science, Mathematics, Accounting & Finance, Business & Management Studies, and Economics & Econometrics.

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